



STAFF REPORT

Belmont Visioning Project - Discussion of Draft Vision Themes

August 26, 2003

Honorable Mayor and Council Members

On April 22, 2003, the City Council initiated the Belmont Visioning Project with the goal of creating a long-range vision statement for the community. Since that time seven citizen committees, City staff and the consultants at MIG, Inc. have conducted over thirty-five meetings with in-depth, lively and diverse conversations about the future of Belmont. At this point, the seven committees have completed their primary tasks: Identifying a set of “themes” from which a vision for Belmont can be crafted. The purpose of this agenda item is to bring the Council up to date on the project, review the set of vision themes and provide an opportunity for Council comment and direction, if any.

Discussion

During the months of June and July, the seven visioning committees – Community Connections, Economic Development, Youth & Education, Neighborhoods & Open Space, The Arts, History, and Place & Urban Design – each conducted four to six meetings. Their work was directed first at identifying conditions, trends and values they held about Belmont from their particular perspectives. From these ideas, they moved to determining specific themes they believed should be part of the community’s vision for itself. This was the first major stage in the development of the vision statement. A total of twenty-nine themes were offered (see attachments).

The second stage began July 30th, when the committee chairs met together and reviewed all the themes for the first time. The chairs searched out areas of commonality and identified a set of eighteen shared ideas:

Destination	Visual Enhancement
Economic Vitality	Small-town, Semi-rural Feel
Education	Transportation
Arts	Trees
Sense of Place	Hills
Interconnectedness/ Partnerships	Open Space
Access	Recreation & Sports
Communication	Historic Preservation
Publicity	Historic Influence

On August 13th, the entire membership gathered to review both the basic themes and the shared ideas. At this meeting, commonalities were again discussed and debated. At the conclusion, the list of eighteen ideas was grouped and cross-relationships were mapped, as follows:

- **SENSE OF PLACE**
 - Natural Beauty
 - Trees
 - Hills
 - Open Space
 - Small Town
 - Historic Preservation
 - Visual Enhancement
- **ECONOMIC VITALITY**
 - Publicity
 - Destination
- **DESTINATION**
 - Sense of Place
 - Open Space
- **EDUCATION**
 - Recreation & Sports
- **ARTS**
- **COMMUNICATION**
 - Publicity
 - Access
 - Transportation
- **INTER-CONNECTEDNESS / PARTNERSHIPS**
 - Communication
 - Economic Vitality
- **RECREATION & SPORTS**
- **SMALL-TOWN, SEMI-RURAL FEEL**
 - VISUAL ENHANCEMENT
 - Trees
 - Hills
 - Open Space
 - ACCESS
 - Transportation
 - HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 - Historic Influence
 - HISTORIC INFLUENCE
 - OPEN SPACE
 - PUBLICITY
 - TRANSPORTATION
 - TREES
 - HILLS

Those items receiving the strongest support (“first tier”) are listed in bold. However, the remaining ideas are not lost, but have been grouped under one or more first tier idea. It is expected that from these shared ideas, a vision statement for Belmont will be created.

The next step will be to take all this work to the larger community on Vision Saturday (September 6, 2003) for a wider dialogue about the purpose of a vision statement, the committees’ vision themes, and the community’s desires for the future. After Vision Saturday, the sum of all this work will be used to prepare a preliminary statement to be tested in September at the Art & Wine Festival and on the City’s web-site. A draft Vision Statement will be offered to the Council for your approval on October 14, 2003.

Comments

During the design of this project in April, staff included a ‘check-in’ with the City Council at this point in the work schedule. Our intent at that time, and our purpose tonight, is to let the Council review the preliminary work before it is widely publicized, and receive any reactions, directions or expressions of concerns the Council may have.

We are mindful that the vision statement is ultimately adopted by the Council, and therefore is the Council’s vision for the community. The Council made clear at the outset of this project that staff was to bring forward a statement that reflects a wide and deep involvement from the community, and we have worked diligently toward that objective. Nevertheless, it will be the Council to say what Belmont’s vision will be for its General Plan update, economic development strategy and other long-range planning for the foreseeable future.

Staff believes that the Council should be pleased with the energy and commitment offered by the more than seventy community members who served on the seven committees. In most cases, committees operated without staff guidance, and every committee maintained high attendance, took their tasks seriously and produced insightful, sincere and optimistic observations. Further, staff believes that the commonalities among the committees’ perspectives are greater than the differences and that we are very close to capturing the fundamental values of the community – what may be described as Belmont’s DNA.

With all this background, it is still possible that we missed something – a value or theme that was not picked up in all our discussions. The Council’s assistance is needed to assure that the draft vision statement we bring you in October is a reflection of your values. Therefore, we are asking for you to respond to what has been produced to this point, knowing that more work remains and that the community’s wider voice will be sought during September.

Fiscal Impact

None.

Recommendation

No action is required. The Council may wish to offer any comments or direction to staff.

Attachments

A. Committee Reports – Vision Themes

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